

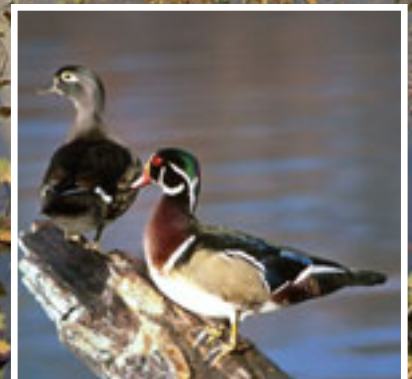


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge and Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge

Comprehensive Conservation Plan

September 2011



Front cover:

Little Marsh on Mason Neck
National Wildlife Refuge
Bill Wallen

Bald eagle
Bill Wallen

Prothonotary warbler
©Jeff Lewis

Wood ducks
Dave Menke/USFWS

Great blue heron
Steve Hillebrand/USFWS

Back cover:

Little Marsh on Mason Neck
National Wildlife Refuge
Bill Wallen



*This blue goose, designed by
J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become
the symbol of the National Wildlife
Refuge System.*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 150-million acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of more than 550 national wildlife refuges and thousands of waterfowl production areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance Program which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

**Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck
National Wildlife Refuge and
Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge**

*Comprehensive Conservation Plan
September 2011*

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9/1/2011



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Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex Vision Statement

The Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex provides exceptional forested, grassland, and wetland habitats for wildlife in a dynamic, highly urbanized region of Northern Virginia. We will maintain and enhance those quality habitats along the middle tidal Potomac River for native wildlife, particularly bald eagles and other species of conservation concern.

The proximity of the Refuge Complex to our Nation's capital provides unparalleled opportunities to demonstrate the importance of the natural world in enhancing the quality of human life and raise public awareness about the value of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Through outreach, education, and partnerships, we will foster stewardship of the living resources of the tidal Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Visitors will have diverse opportunities for quality, compatible, wildlife-dependent recreation.

Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck Refuge Vision Statement

Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge is dedicated to the protection of the bald eagle and exemplifies the significant efforts, contributions, and successes of conservationists in Virginia. The refuge will continue to protect and enhance regionally important habitat for the bald eagle, migratory birds, and native wildlife and plant species along the tidal Potomac River. We will provide quality wildlife-dependent recreational and educational opportunities, in particular, wildlife viewing and photography. In cooperation with the other agencies in the Mason Neck Management area, we will work to resolve resource issues on the Mason Neck Peninsula.

Featherstone Refuge Vision Statement

Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge provides valuable acres of 'wild woods and wetland' which are rapidly disappearing within this region of Virginia. The refuge will continue to protect wetlands, bottomland hardwoods, and associated native wildlife and plants in an otherwise highly urbanized setting along the tidal Potomac River. Assuming access issues are resolved, the refuge will provide limited, quality, wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, in particular, wildlife viewing and fishing.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge and Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge

Comprehensive Conservation Plan

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Summary

Type of Action: Administrative – Development of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Lead Agency: U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service

Location: Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge—
Fairfax County, Virginia
Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge—
Prince William County, Virginia

**Administrative
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This Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the 2,277-acre Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge (Mason Neck Refuge) and the 325-acre Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge (Featherstone Refuge) is the culmination of a planning effort involving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Virginia State agencies, local partners, refuge neighbors, private landowners, the Friends of Potomac River Refuges, and the local community. This CCP establishes 15-year management goals and objectives for the refuges' wildlife and habitats, public use programs, and administration and facilities.

Under this plan, we make improvements to both refuges' biological and public use programs. On Mason Neck Refuge, our highest priority is to protect and enhance the diversity, integrity, and health of Great Marsh, other refuge wetlands, and the refuge's mature hardwood-mixed forest habitats to support Federal trust resources and species of conservation concern, particularly bald eagles, waterbirds, and forest-dwelling songbirds. We also plan to work with partners to design and implement measures to protect the refuge's shoreline from erosion. We will enhance our visitor services program by improving infrastructure and the quality of our wildlife observation, nature photography, white-tailed deer hunting, interpretation, and environmental education opportunities. We will also offer new opportunities, such as a youth turkey hunt.

On Featherstone Refuge, our highest priority is to monitor and protect sensitive wildlife habitat, such as shoreline and riparian forest, from human disturbance. For the first time, we will open Featherstone Refuge to public use by allowing non-motorized boat access at one designated location along Farm Creek. In order to open the refuge to further public use, we will continue to work with Prince William County and other stakeholders to secure public parking and safe, legal public access to the refuge. Once public access is secured, we will construct trails and viewing and fishing platforms to facilitate wildlife observation, nature photography, and recreational fishing. When we have additional staff in place, we will evaluate a detailed proposal to offer a hunting program in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

For both refuges, we will improve our outreach and visibility in the community through new or enhanced partnerships. Finally, we will employ an adaptive management approach that includes adjusting our objectives and strategies as a result of new information.

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